

INSIGHTS from the SEDRA

Insights from the Sedra is a project of the Scholar's Kollel of Great Neck. It aims to provide several questions and answers about the Sedra, culled from various commentaries, including the following: Baal Haturim, Darash Moshe, Vedebartha Bam by Rabbi Moshe Bogomilsky, Torah Treasures by Dov Furer, Wellsprings of Torah by Alexander Friedman, and Kol Dodi by Rabbi Dovid Feinstein, Great Torah Lights by Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Goodman, Something To Say by Dov Wasserman, The Vilna Gaon, Growth Through Torah by Zelig Pliskin and The Call of the Torah.

ושבתה הארץ שבת לה'

“The land shall observe a Shabbat rest for G-d.” (25:2)

QUESTION: The word “*Shabbat*” is superfluous. It could have said “*Veshabta ha’aretz laHashem*” – “The land shall observe a rest for Hashem”?

ANSWER: The solar calendar contains approximately 365 days, which equal 52 weeks plus one day. Since in every period of seven days there is a *Shabbat*, during the entire year there are at least 52 *Shabbatot* with one extra *Shabbat* every seven years. When the farmer uses his land, in reality it is working continuously every day of the week and not resting on *Shabbat*.

In a period of six years the land works a total 312 *Shabbatot*. Therefore, the Torah designates the seventh year as *shmittah*, so that the 312 days plus the 52 *Shabbat* days of the seventh year, and the *one* additional *Shabbat* which accumulated over the seven-year period, the land will rest totally and observe *Shabbat* to Hashem for 365 days. (Mateh Moshe)

QUESTION: *Rashi* comments, “for the name of Hashem, just as it was stated regarding the *Shabbat* commemorative of creation.” What is the connection between the *shmittah* year and the *Shabbat* of creation?

ANSWER: When Hashem created the world, he gave the Jews *Shabbat* as a time for spiritual rejuvenation. For a person who spends the weekdays immersed in work, *Shabbat* is to be devoted to prayer, Torah study, and becoming closer to Hashem. *Rashi* is teaching that the year of *shmittah* should be like *Shabbat* – a year devoted to study and prayer, thus enabling one to become closer to Hashem. (HaDerush V’Halyun)

שש שנים תזרע שדר

“Six years you shall you sow your field...” (25:3)

The last letters of the words שש שנים תזרע form the word שמע, alluding to the words שמע ישראל, which have six letters. All who plant for six years and rest during the seventh year, testify to the Sovereignty of Hashem, who created the entire world in six days and rested on the seventh. Those who toil during the *shmittah* year are considered as if they deny Hashem’s supreme reign of

the world. When referring to the time of Creation, the Torah considers the third and the sixth day special and the phrase **כי טוב** – *that it was good* is written twice. Consequently, *Bnei Yisrael* were commanded to give *maa'ser ani* – a tithe to the poor – in the third and sixth year of the *shmittah* cycle, to illustrate our kindness to those in need at a time which corresponds to those days when *ki tov* was doubled. (Meshech Chochmah)

וקראתם דרור בארץ לכל ישיביה...ואיש אל משפחתו תשב
“And proclaim freedom throughout the land for all its inhabitants...and you shall return each man to his family...” (25:10)

The Torah states that the *Yovel* year is a year of freedom for all, meaning that every Jewish slave is freed (*Rashi*). If so, why does the Torah repeat that “people return to their family,” which also refers to the freeing of slaves (*Rashi*)?

The *Rambam* (*Shemittah* 10:14) states that at the beginning of the *Yovel* year the slaves cease working, but do not yet return home. Only after the blowing of the *shofar* on *Yom Kippur* do the fields return to their original owners and the slaves to their families. This is alluded to in the verse. The first phrase refers to the first stage of cessation of slavery. The end of the verse alludes to the second stage of *Yovel*, which is the actual return of the slaves to their homes.

(R' David Soloveitchik)

Yovel is the year when all the Jewish slaves are freed. However, the phrase “all its inhabitants” seems awkward, since only slaves are freed, not masters. The *Gemara* (*Kiddushin* 20a) states that if someone buys a slave it is as if he bought a master for himself. The basis for this statement is that the Torah has strict regulations how to treat one's slave. This being so, when one's slave is freed, in a sense the master himself is being freed from being “enslaved” to his slave.

(Pnei Yehoshua)

את כספך לא תתן לו בנשך
“Your money you shall not give him upon interest...” (25:37)

It would seem more precise to say, ‘Do not loan him your money for interest.’ But *R' Meir* (*Bava Metzia* 72) rules that if a lender writes a loan contract which includes interest, he not only forfeits the interest, but the capital as well. Accordingly, this verse may be hinting that, ‘By charging interest, you are giving him your money.’ (Wellsprings of Torah)

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